

Dear Chairman Kerns, Vice-chairmen Bennett and Mac Donald and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am Christina Pfarr Hayden. My father is Dr. Paul Pfarr M.D. (deceased), formerly of Sanders County. I cared for my maternal grandmother in my home in Bozeman for 2 years until she died naturally at age 89. I helped my family care for my brother until he died a very happy death from Lou Gehrig's disease. I now reside in Butte.

"Compassion" comes from the latin, "com-", with and "pati- (passus)", to suffer, to suffer with. It would never be an act of compassion to abandon anyone in a condition of such suffering in mind or body, that would lead them to such a state of despair as to seek self- murder as the only remedy. Is it not a mis-interpretation of a "right to privacy" that would isolate and alienate such persons from the very care givers, friends and family who would suffer with them, who would seek to relieve their suffering to the best of their ability? Love does this.

Suffering weakens us, making us vulnerable enough to reach out, to entrust ourselves to others for the care we need in order to recover our strength and autonomy. If a diagnosis of suffering may result in a prescription of death, trust in the medical profession will break down. Physicians themselves may be vulnerable to being used to execute the death of a patient. The poor, the elderly, and the sick may be vulnerable to coercion to consent to suicide, and require legal protection, from greedy heirs, insurance companies, public servants, and others who would prey on their vulnerability.

Administering lethal drugs is an act of violence, a death penalty. Physician assisted suicide would legally protect those who collaborate in lethal acts of violence against suffering persons, because they are guilty of human suffering. Have we become intolerant of human suffering because we are becoming ever more unwilling to suffer for and with those who suffer? The best of what it means to be human, is to be with and for others, that they may live. What is at stake is the human person, his solidarity with other persons, in his human condition as one who suffers, and his right to authentic human compassion when he suffers.

A physician administering lethal dosages of otherwise healing medicines in order to relieve human suffering, does not participate in a healing profession, without changing the meaning of medicine and life itself. Suffering is a condition of human life, as is death. When death becomes the remedy for suffering, life itself becomes the disease, and death becomes the cure. Great harm will be done to the medical profession if physicians cooperate in executing the wishes of a suffering patient by assisting in his execution. A "human" remedy would be to strengthen the family to care for it's own, to provide for sufficient social and health care services to any Montanan, suffering to such an extent as to be vulnerable, because of suffering, to suicide. Palliative care for pain, and psychotropic drugs for depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders, are moral and legal remedies. When made available and effective, these "healing medicines" may remove any motivation for ending life by suicide.

The democratic ideal acknowledges and safeguards the dignity of every human person, so that free and responsible persons may be protected for full participation in society. A genuinely human co-existence allows those whose lives and dignity are compromised to be protected. The tragedy of suicide breaks the ties of human solidarity within families, and within society. Physician-assisted suicide breaks the ties of trust between human persons and those in the medical profession, traditionally dedicated to relieving suffering and preserving life.

**Please protect Montanans and Montana's Physicians from Physician Assisted Suicide.**

**Please vote YES on HB 505.**